

## Curriculum program review tops school board's discussion

Written by Wauneta Breeze  
Thursday, 14 March 2013 16:53 -

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**By Sheri Hink-Wagner**

### **The Wauneta Breeze**

Wauneta-Palisade Public Schools Superintendent Randy Geier and the W-P School Board are dealing with some tough decisions as they look at the budget for the 2013-2014 school year.

The school board met for their regular meeting Monday, March 11 at the Wauneta Attendance Center. Two members of the public, Sheila Pfeiffer and Rod Wheeler, were present for portions of the meeting. Board member John Jutten was excused from the meeting due to illness.

The school board is charged with balancing the school's budget in an environment of declining state aid. Geier adamantly stated the school is in "fine shape" financially, but there are difficult decisions to be made nonetheless.

The school district will receive \$26,000 in state aid for the 2013-2014 school year, down slightly from state aid received for the current school year, but down significantly—over \$600,000—from the 2010-2011 school year.

Superintendent Randy Geier has repeatedly told the board, "Six years ago we could pay three months of expenses with state aid, now we can pay approximately one tenth of one month's expenses."

The chart on this page details the amount of state aid W-P schools have received in the past six years.

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The fact that the school will receive less state aid, combined with increasing costs throughout school operations, spurred the board to have an in-depth discussion of ways to tighten the school's budget at the Feb. 25 special meeting.

The discussion continued during their regular meeting this week and will continue again at a special meeting currently scheduled for March 26.

The biggest allocation within the W-P schools' budget is payroll.

Wauneta-Palisade Schools currently employs just over 60 employees (full time and part time) and has 211 students.

### **Potential changes discussed**

Another focus, which dominated much of the discussion time at this week's meeting, centered around curriculum program review. The school board will review the courses offered at W-P as well as ways to increase staff efficiency.

During the meeting, School board members noted hearing a rumor around town that certain programs, specifically the ag program, are in threat of being cut.

Superintendent Geier negated the rumor by saying, "No programs will be cut."

Geier and the school board members stated they are looking at reducing programs to alleviate

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budget concerns.

The board discussed possible reduction or changes to several programs including the ag, guidance, work study and preschool programs.

Though no decisions were made at the meeting, board members are considering changes to W-P's course offerings.

They must counterbalance budget concerns with Rule 10, which schools and districts must meet to achieve accreditation by the state and to receive state funds.

The ag program currently offers three primary courses, one of which has no students enrolled. Board members expressed regret that the ag program may need to be tightened.

Some of the ag courses currently satisfy requirements under Rule 10 for occupational education.

The board discussed several avenues regarding possible changes in the type of courses currently provided by the ag instructor including potentially changing the type of ag courses offered and/or having the art instructor take over the welding and woods instruction.

"It's just not a full-time position," one board member stated in relation to the ag instructor's position.

Another suggestion made was to reduce the guidance counselor position to part time, a change that would not effect student offerings.

One board member noted that he had seen where another area school was in search of a

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guidance counselor and that it might be possible to “share” a guidance counselor with an area school.

Another suggestion regarding the guidance counselor was to have her teach classes in addition to her counselling work.

The work study program was another area of discussion at the meeting. Board members discussed possibly requiring feedback from employers or reports from students, which would allow the work study program to function as a career education course under Rule 10.

Board members also noted that the preschool instructor is currently a full-time teacher but only teaches classes four days per week.

They stated it would be possible to either make preschool classes meet five days per week or reduce the position to .80 FTE.

“These are not easy decisions, they’re just things that have to be done,” said Geier.

The school board will continue their discussion of the curriculum at W-P schools at a special meeting currently scheduled for 5:00 p.m. MT/ 6:00 p.m. CT on Tuesday, March 26. The public is welcome to attend school board meetings.

## **Reports on other items to alleviate budget**

Jon Anderjaska reported back to the board on the research he and John Jutten did regarding possibly changing the school’s schedule to four days per week instead of five.

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He reported their calculations showed the four day per week schedule would not provide the budget alleviation needed. In addition, the change could possibly create challenges in regards to the district's number of instruction hours.

The idea was dismissed as a possible solution for the budget issues being faced.

Allison Sandman reported back to the board that the committee assigned to research the school lunch program has not had the opportunity to meet due to scheduling conflicts. They will investigate possible savings from the lunch program and report to the board at a future meeting.

### **Resignations accepted**

The school board heard and accepted resignations from two W-P staff members.

Troy Holmberg, who has been at the school for four years and currently serves as the K-12 Principal/Activities Director, resigned his positions effective at the end of the current school year. In his letter to the board he stated he will stay in the area as long as needed this summer to complete his duties and assist incoming personnel.

The board also heard and accepted the letter of resignation from Patti Holmberg who currently works as a .50 FTE Title 1 teacher.